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**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A spread illuminating apparatus comprising:  
a transparent substrate made of a light-transmissible material and having a light reflection pattern having a number of ridges formed on at least one surface thereof; and  
a bar-like light source disposed close to an end surface of the transparent substrate,  
wherein a cover formed of a light-transmissible material is integrally provided over the one surface of the transparent substrate sandwiching a cushioning material consisting of a light-transmissible substance in such a manner that the number of ridges are directly covered with the cushioning material.
2. (Original) A spread illuminating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the cushioning material is of a substance with low refractive index.
3. (Original) A spread illuminating apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the substance is gel.
4. (Original) A spread illuminating apparatus according to claim 2, wherein the substance is liquid.
5. (Original) A spread illuminating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the cushioning material is of a gaseous substance.
6. (Original) A spread illuminating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a thin film of a substance with low refractive index is formed on the light reflection pattern of the transparent substrate, and the cushioning material is of a gel substance.

7. (Original) A spread illuminating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a thin film of a substance with low refractive index is formed on the light reflection pattern of the transparent substrate, and the cushioning material is of a liquid substance.

8. (Original) A spread illuminating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a thin film of a substance with low refractive index is formed on the light reflection pattern of the transparent substrate, and the cushioning material is of a gaseous substance.

9. (Original) A spread illuminating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the cushioning material comprises a plurality of transparent elastic members.

10. (Original) A spread illuminating apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the cover is formed of a hard material.

11. (Original) A spread illuminating apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the hard material is glass.

12. (Original) A spread illuminating apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the hard material is transparent polymer.

13. (Currently Amended) A spread illuminating apparatus ~~according to claim 1,~~  
~~wherein over which a touch panel is disposed, comprising:~~

a transparent substrate made of a light-transmissible material and having a light reflection pattern having a number of ridges formed on at least one surface thereof; and

a bar-like light source disposed close to an end surface of the transparent substrate,

wherein a cover formed of a light-transmissible material is integrally provided over the one surface of the transparent substrate sandwiching a cushioning material consisting of a light-transmissible substance in such a manner that the number of ridges are directly covered with the cushioning material, and the cover constitutes a lower electrode substrate of a the touch panel. ~~panel which may be disposed over the spread illuminating apparatus.~~